



**Task 10**  
**Plan Adoption and Public**  
**Participation**

## 10.1 Plan Adoption and Public Participation

The first purpose of this chapter is to describe the various public participation, information, outreach, and education activities conducted by the Panhandle Water Planning Group (PWPG). All activities and events discussed in this section were performed in direct support of the Regional Water Planning Effort and serve to support the PWPG's dedication and commitment to ensuring that the public is provided with timely, accurate information regarding the planning process and that opportunities to provide input to the planning process are available as often as possible.

The second purpose of this chapter is to detail the plan adoption process followed by the PWPG. The process explains the required hearing, receipt of comment, comment response, and final adoption of the Panhandle Water Planning Area's Regional Water Plan.

## 10.2 Panhandle Water Planning Group

The Panhandle Water Planning Group was created in accordance with and operates under the auspices of Senate Bill 1 (1997) and updated with Senate Bill 2 (2001). The enabling legislation and subsequent Texas Water Development Board planning rules and guidelines established the basis for the creation and composition of the regional planning groups. The original statute listed eleven required interest groups that must be represented at all times on the planning groups. To these original eleven interest groups, the PWPG has elected to add an additional group to adequately ensure that the interests of the region are fully protected. The following lists the twelve interest groups represented by the twenty-two voting members of the PWPG:

General Public	Small Business
Counties	Electric Generating Utilities
Municipalities	River Authorities
Industrial	Water Districts
Agricultural	Water Utilities
Environmental	Higher Education (added interest group)

Table 10-1 lists the voting members of the Panhandle Water Planning Group, their respective interest groups, and their principle county of interest. Table 10-2 lists the six former members of the Panhandle Water Planning Group who also participated in the planning process. The PWPG appreciates the contributions of these individuals and would like for their efforts to be recognized along with the current members.

**Table 10-1: Panhandle Water Planning Group  
Voting Members**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>	<i>County of Interest</i>
Janet Guthrie	General Public	Hemphill
Vernon Cook	Counties	Roberts
Dan Coffey	Municipalities	Potter/Randall
David Landis	Municipalities	Ochiltree
Bill Hallerberg	Industrial	Gray
Denise Jett	Industrial	Hutchinson
Ben Weinheimer	Agricultural	Region
Rudie Tate	Agricultural	Collingsworth
Janet Tregellas	Agricultural	Lipscomb
B.A. Donelson	Agricultural	Sherman
Dr. Nolan Clark	Environmental	Potter/Randall
Grady Skaggs	Environmental	Oldham
Inge Brady	Environmental	Potter/Randall
Rusty Gilmore	Small Business	Dallam
Gale Henslee	Electric Generating	Utility Region
Jim Derington	River Authorities	Hansford
Richard Bowers	Water Districts	Moore
C.E. Williams	Water Districts	Carson
John Williams	Water Districts	Hutchinson
Bobbie Kidd	Water Districts	Donley
Charles Cooke	Water Utilities	Hutchinson
Dr. John Sweeten	Higher Education	Region

**Table 10-2: Panhandle Water Planning Group  
Former Members**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>	<i>County of Interest</i>
Therese Abraham	General Public	Hemphill
Dean Looper	General Public	Hemphill
Frank Simms	Agriculture	Carson
Robert Jacobson	Environmental	Oldham
Trish Neusch	Environmental	Potter
Michael Nelson	Industrial	Hutchinson

In addition to the 22 voting members, the PWPG has six ex-officio positions in accordance with the appropriate regulations governing the process and one additional ex-officio position established to ensure appropriate representation of regional interests. Table 10-3 lists the six ex-officio positions on the Panhandle Water Planning Group and their respective interests:

**Table 10-3: Panhandle Water Planning Group  
Ex-Officio Positions**

<i>PWPG Member</i>	<i>Ex-Officio Position</i>	<i>Interest Group</i>
Temple McKinnon	Texas Water Development Board	TWDB (Rules)
Steve Jones	Texas Department of Agriculture	TDA (Rules)
Bobbie Kidd (Voting Member)	Region B Liaison	Water Districts
Kent Satterwhite	Region O Liaison & 357.4G4	Water Districts
Mickey Black	USDA/NRCS	Agricultural
Charles Munger	Texas Parks & Wildlife Department	TPWD (Rules)

### **10.2.1 Panhandle Water Planning Group Public Information and Education Commitment**

The Panhandle Water Planning Group (PWPG) is firmly committed to ensuring the activities of the Planning Group are open and accessible to all interested parties. In addition, the PWPG has worked diligently to ensure that the public throughout the region is afforded every opportunity to participate in Planning Group activities and to receive timely information regarding the planning process. These efforts are spearheaded by the Public Participation Committee chaired by Judge Vernon Cook, Roberts County. Committee members are Charles Cooke, Janet Tregellas, Dr. John Sweeten, Kent Satterwhite, B.A. Donelson, Bill Hallerberg, Jim Derington, and Inge Brady. Participation in the Regional Water Planning Effort by local entities and the public was excellent throughout the process. Public Participation opportunities were afforded to the region through the following broad categories. The Committee targeted efforts towards public involvement in the following broad categories:

- Special Regional Water Planning Presentations – Working primarily through the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, the PWPG provided speakers to interest groups throughout the planning process. Presentations were given throughout the region and no invitations to speak were declined.

- **Media** – Media throughout the region were provided notification of all Planning Group activities as required by SB1 guidelines. Participation by the media was excellent throughout the process, with Planning Group representatives appearing on numerous media events. The PWPG also received routine press in all regional newspapers and regional radio stations provided public service announcements of relevant events.
- **Electronic Communication – Web Access to Planning Information** - The Panhandle Water Planning Group has developed and placed on-line a dedicated project website. The site, [www.panhandlewater.org](http://www.panhandlewater.org), has been available to the public 24 hours a day since June of 1999. The site is updated on a regular basis and provides the general public with quick, reliable access to planning data at any time. In addition, the TWDB website is also a source of materials for PWPG data and reports.
- **Public Information Meetings** – The PWPG held all meetings in accordance with the open meetings act and encouraged public attendance at the meetings. Minutes of these meetings are available via the PWPG website.
- **Symposiums and Forums** – The PWPG has provided technical expertise to several symposiums and forums during the planning process. Included among these are the Ogallala Commons, Great Plains Symposium, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum Water Symposium and two Stakeholder Advisory Forums.
- **Required Public Hearing** – One formal hearing was conducted during the planning process to present and review the Initially Prepared Plan to the Region on August 9, 2005. An excess of 65 people were in attendance of this public hearing.
- **Panhandle Water Planning Group Meetings** – The Panhandle Water Planning Group conducted 25 meetings. While most meetings were held in Amarillo at the offices of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, meetings were also conducted in Bushland and Borger. Sub-groups of the PWPG met 44 times throughout the planning process. All meetings of the PWPG are conducted as open meetings and public attendance has been as high as 60 plus people at one time.

### **10.3 Public Participation Activities**

Specific details on public participation activities conducted during the Regional Water Planning Process are summarized and detailed in this section.

#### **10.3.1 Special Regional Water Planning Presentations**

Special Regional Water Planning Presentations - The PWPG, through the direction and oversight of the Public Participation Committee, delivered numerous presentations to various interest groups throughout the region. The scope and content of these presentations was tailored specifically to each unique interest group. In order to accurately document that special presentations reached all appropriate interests, presentations were tracked by category to ensure that the public outreach activities conducted achieved maximum effectiveness. To this end, special presentations have

been broken down and analyzed in the following specific categories: Civic Groups; Special Interest Groups; Agricultural Groups; and Government Entities.

A. Civic Groups: This category is comprised of traditional civic clubs, organizations, and other similar entities. Organizations of this nature provide an excellent vehicle to reach a broad segment of the general public in each particular location within Region A. Examples of organizations in this category include Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and Chambers of Commerce.

B. Agricultural Groups: The largest single water user group in the Panhandle Water Planning Area is the Agricultural sector, which accounts for approximately 91% of all water used. The PWPG felt that outreach to this segment was vital to ensure that the plan adequately addressed all issues and protected all interests. In order to reach the agricultural sector, the PWPG targeted ag-specific groups for special presentations.

C. Government Entities: A key focus of Senate Bill 1 was on municipal water use, the PWPG also undertook an effort to reach those entities with specific responsibility to provide water for municipal use.

### **10.3.2 Media Events and Coverage**

Media Events: The PWPG made a commitment early in the planning process to enlist the support and interest of the local media. Overall, this effort was successful and yielded several excellent coverage items for the water planning process. The detail below lists several of the many media. The PWPG would like to specifically thank the many local media outlets which provided excellent assistance and coverage of this effort.

A. Television Coverage of meetings and events: All local television stations were notified of each meeting and were invited to attend. PWPG representatives were interviewed frequently in association with the regular meetings that were held.

D. Radio Coverage: Radio coverage of PWPG activities has been excellent. Several stations throughout the region have provided event notification, including KGNC, KEYE, and KGRO.

E. Newspaper Coverage: Regional newspapers have been a great assistance to the PWPG in providing notice and coverage of events. In addition, the largest regional circulation newspaper, Amarillo Globe News, has provided various feature reports. Smaller newspapers throughout the region have also provided articles, publication notices, and features on water planning.

### **10.3.3 Electronic Outreach**

Electronic Communications: The Panhandle Water Planning Group recognizes the importance of electronic communications as a means to keep the public informed and provided with regional planning documents. Accordingly, the PWPG included the development and maintenance of a project website as a public participation goal. The website was developed and placed online in June of 1999 and has been in operation

continuously since that time. The website has proved to be an excellent communications tool and has been updated an average of at least twice per month since its inception. Information contained on the website includes general descriptions of Senate Bill 1, listings of all PWPG members, regional water demand and projections information, an on-going calendar of events, and a large download section. The download section contains meeting minutes, regional maps, aquifer maps, public presentations, and the entire 2005 Initially Prepared Plan, including public comments, references, appendices, and the Executive Summary. The website contains links to numerous water-related entities and has produced responses from as far away as Canada. The PWPG's project website is located at [www.panhandlewater.org](http://www.panhandlewater.org).

#### **10.3.4 Formal Public Hearing and Advisory Forums**

A Public Hearing and two Advisory Forums: The PWPG has conducted a public hearing and two advisory forums throughout the planning process. These meetings have been conducted at key milestones in the process and were designed to keep the region informed and to solicit input at important junctures in the plan from citizens and stakeholders.

A. Stakeholder Advisory Forum: The PWPG conducted two Stakeholder Advisory Forums as required by the TWDB to allow for the various stakeholders in the Northern Ogallala area to comment and discuss the Groundwater Availability Model (GAM).

B. Public Hearing: The Public Hearing was conducted to relay information regarding the Initially Prepared Regional Water Plan.

#### **10.3.5 Surveys**

Workshops and Surveys: In addition to the activities described above, the PWPG also undertook a series of surveys to assist local entities in participating in the planning process and also to relay relevant information to various professional groups through workshops.

A. Surveys: Throughout the planning process, the PWPG conducted three surveys. The first, conducted during the preparation of Task 2, was designed to present to local water user groups a summary of their projected populations and water use demands. Surveys were prepared for each identified municipal water user group in the region and were hand-delivered to each individual user. The information obtained during this process was used to either validate pre-existing population and water demand data or to provide a reference to use in requesting revisions to individual municipal numbers where appropriate. The second survey conducted by the PWPG was during the process of preparing Task 3. The purpose of this survey was to identify the wholesale water providers and establish their populations and demands. The third survey conducted by the PWPG was targeted towards discussing water needs and the cost associated with meeting those needs as specified in Task 9 Infrastructure Finance Reports. The purpose of this survey was to provide all municipal use groups an opportunity to review and accept or modify the strategies proposed to meet future water needs.

## **10.4 Panhandle Water Planning Group Functions**

Members of the PWPG have been quite active and very committed to the planning process. Through the course of the functions detailed below, Planning Group members have contributed approximately 1,800 non-reimbursed hours of time. In addition, PWPG members have traveled over 25,000 miles. This level of participation by these Planning Group members speaks very highly of not only the commitment of the people of the region to the water planning process but also to the intense effort and dedication to the process. As mentioned previously, the PWPG has not reimbursed any members for the time they have committed to the process and only a very small amount (less than approximately 2,500) of the miles traveled have been reimbursed through use of local funds. This fact becomes quite important when the membership of the PWPG is analyzed. Of the 27 members, three are from either state or federal agencies and seven represent entities whose primary responsibilities are water resources. Three members represent entities that provide end-user water. The remaining 14 members do not hold employment with organizations who traditionally provide water to end-users or who are normally involved in water resource management or planning. Appendix X details functions conducted by the PWPG or their committees while Appendix Y details the commitment in terms of hours and miles traveled of the PWPG members.

### **10.4.1 Panhandle Water Planning Group Meetings**

Through the 60 month planning process, the PWPG has conducted 25 formal, Planning Group meetings. Attendance at the meetings by the 27 member Panhandle Water Planning Group has been excellent, with appropriate quorums in attendance at all meetings. PWPG meetings have been conducted in Bushland, Borger and Amarillo, with the majority of the meetings being held in the office of the political subdivision, the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission. Frequency of PWPG meetings has averaged one per three months.

### **10.4.2 Panhandle Water Planning Group Committee Activities**

To further enhance the regional planning process, the PWPG has established a committee structure to assist in evaluating planning progress and to provide recommendations to the PWPG. The committees, as authorized, serve only in an advisory capacity. In addition, committee membership includes, where appropriate, PWPG members as well as nonmembers.

The PWPG has authorized five active and three standing but non-active committees. The active committees are composed of the Executive Committee, Public Participation Committee, Municipal and Industrial Demands & Projections Committee, Agricultural Demands & Projections Committee, and Groundwater Model Committee. The three additional standing committees are the Consultant Selection Committee, Scope of Work Committee, and Contact Committee (local funding). The committee structure as described has been very effective in assisting the Regional Planning Process. Throughout the process, 35 committee meetings have been held, for a frequency of approximately 1.71 per month.



Appendix Z contains a full listing of the PWPG committees and their membership.

### **10.4.3 Interregional Coordination**

As part of the planning process, the PWPG determined that coordination with adjacent Region B and Region O water planning groups was necessary. The PWPG appointed a board member to be the liaison between each respective region and charged them with the assignment of attendance of their region's meetings. Coordination was made with the notice and exchange of meeting agendas and when necessary, attendance and participation in their meetings was provided by additional PWPG Board members and staff. At every regular meeting of the PWPG, the liaison reported to the Board the activity of their respective planning group's activity. Communication among the Board Chairmen and Board members was also utilized and allowed for a secondary line of exchange of information to take place.

## **10.5 Plan Adoption Process**

Plan Adoption: In accordance with Senate Bill 1 and 2 and the relevant rules governing the water planning process, the PWPG conducted a formal process for the adoption of the Regional Water Plan. Activities under this section are primarily along two main lines. The first series of activities are directly related to the adoption of the Initially Prepared Plan and the second series of activities are related to final adoption of the completed Regional Water Plan.

### **10.5.1 Public Hearing**

Required Public Hearing: The PWPG conducted the required public hearing on August 9, 2005. The Hearing was held at the Texas A&M Research and Extension facility in Amarillo, Texas. All required notifications for the hearing were posted prior to the 30-day cut-off. Over 150 direct mail notices were sent to interested parties, interest groups, agencies, individuals, water rights holders, etc. Copies of the Initially Prepared Regional Plan were placed in the County Clerks office of each of the 21 counties in the region and were also placed in public libraries or alternate locations in each of the 21 counties. In addition, full posting requirements regarding Secretary of State, County Clerk, and all interested parties were conducted. Attendance at the Hearing totaled over 60 individuals. Oral comments were received at the hearing and written comments were received through Monday, October 10, 2005.

### **10.5.2 Initially Prepared Plan Adoption**

IPP Adoption: The PWPG conducted a formal Planning Group meeting prior to the Public Hearing on June 16, 2005. 25 of the 27 Planning Group members were in attendance and the IPP was given unanimous approval for submission to the Texas Water Development Board.

### **10.5.3 Response to Comments**

Response to Comments: Overall, the PWPG received 121 comments regarding the IPP. Comments were broken out on a line-item basis and distributed to the PWPG. The PWPG carefully considered the comments and proposed responses at the meeting held on

October 27 and December 1, 2005. Formal responses to all comments were made and were added to the plan as directed by the entire board. Overall, comments received from the public were generally favorable, and many covered items already addressed in relevant sections of the IPP. In addition to the comments from the public, the PWPG also addressed comments provided by the TWDB and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on the various plan components submitted in the IPP submission. Comment responses were handled by the entire Planning Group, and approved comments are included in the Regional Water Plan. A summation of the comments received and the approved responses is included in Appendix AA.

#### **10.5.4 Final Regional Water Plan Adoption**

The PWPG adopted the final Regional Water Plan for the Panhandle Water Planning Area on December 16, 2005 and approved the same for submission to the TWDB. The Plan was adopted by a unanimous vote.

### **10.6 Local Participation in the Regional Water Planning Process**

Participation by local entities in the Regional Water Planning process was quite commendable. Local funds were necessary to provide for the maintenance and operation of the PWPG, fiscal accountability, meeting costs, posting costs, etc. The PWPG estimated that \$63,000 annually in local funds would be needed to cover these costs. Working through the public participation committee, the original formula from the first round of planning was implemented to attempt to spread these costs equally throughout the region. Possible participants were divided into the following categories: municipalities, counties, water utilities, groundwater districts, surface water districts, and solicited contributions. Entities and organizations in each of these categories were contacted by mail requesting their pro-rata share of the local planning cost. Solicitations were made once, and these various entities and organizations provided over \$62,000 of the needed \$63,000. This equates to over a 98% success rate in raising the needed funds. The PWPG believes this is a strong indicator of the commitment to water resource planning throughout the region.

The PWPG would like to thank and recognize all those entities and organizations who contributed funds to the Regional Water Planning Effort.

In addition to the local funds received, the PWPG adopted a policy whereby all local water use groups are considered to have participated in the Regional Water Plan by virtue of their inclusion in the Plan.

Appendix V contains a full listing of the entities and organizations who voluntarily contributed to the Regional Planning Process.

### **10.7 Conclusion**

The Panhandle Water Planning Group has maintained a high level of commitment to public participation throughout the planning process. The PWPG believes that public

information and participation activities are at least as important to the success of regional planning initiatives as is the data accumulated and analyzed. A key recommendation of the PWPG is to continue to fund and encourage public information activities throughout all subsequent planning processes.